

30. *HIMANTOPUS CANDIDUS* (Bonn.).

La Touche obtained specimens here in 1885-86 (Ibis, 1892, p. 497). We have not procured any since then till last year, when two males were shot in October close to Foochow and a female in the following April a few miles higher up the river. The native "shooting-man" who brought me the first described it as a bird with "very large hands" (!), meaning, of course, long legs.

31. *ANOUS STOLIDUS* (Linn.).

A male in adult plumage was shot on the river near Foochow (about 30 miles from the sea) on 3rd October: a typhoon that we had a couple of days before being, no doubt, the cause of its appearance. The stomach was quite empty.

This bird measured in the flesh:—Length 16·4 inches, wing 10·8, tail 7·0, tarsus 0·9, culmen 1·5.

Foochow,
25th August, 1899.

IV.—*On the Occurrence of Nordmann's Pratincole* (*Glaucola melanoptera*) *in Italy*. By Prof. E. ARRIGONI DEGLI ODDI.

It will be very interesting for your readers to know that *Glaucola melanoptera** has occurred in our country, and that I have been fortunate enough to obtain for my collection a rare and perfectly well-preserved specimen. A few days ago I received from Mr. Marco Gianese, of Lonigo (Vicenza), a large parcel of stuffed birds, this gentleman having decided to sell his collection, composed of birds obtained in the district of Lonigo, which is beautifully situated on the Berici Hills, in the province of Vicenza (Venetian territory). Last year, on two occasions, I bought some other rare birds of Mr. Gianese, among them, I am pleased to mention, many abnormally-coloured specimens, and besides these examples of *Circus cineraceus*, *Sylvia subalpina*, *Potamodus luscinioides*, *Locustella naevia*, *Anthus cervinus*, *A. richardi* (three), *Emberiza leucocephala* (two), *Plectrophanes lapponicus*, *Totanus stagnatilis*, *Anser cinereus*, *Mergus*

* Cf. Sharpe, Cat. B. xxiv. p. 57.

merganser, and *Gelochelidon anglica*, all species most difficult to obtain here.

Lately he has sent me examples of *Cyanecula suecica*, *Plectrophanes lapponicus*, and *Actodromas temmincki* (in full winter dress), *Totanus fuscus* ♂ ♀ (in full summer dress), *Hydrocoleus melanocephalus* ♂ ♀ (in full summer dress), *Rissa tridactyla*, and three beautiful Pratincoles, among which one was labelled "♂, *G. pratincola*, May 5th, 1892, Pila rice-fields, near Bagnolo (Lonigo)."

On first seeing this bird I took no especial notice of it, but I was afterwards impressed by the fact that it was different from the common Pratincoles, because the forehead and lores were jet-black. Then I examined the under-surface of the wing, and I found that it was quite black. Undoubtedly I had before me a real specimen of Nordmann's Pratincole. I must say that I was greatly astonished at this fact, which had remained unrecognized for seven years! But at the same time it is so certain that no doubt whatever can arise about it. In the first place, Mr. Gianese is a good, careful, and honest man; he knows our birds only from experience, principally acquired by his passion for shooting and fowling; besides, his own collection is entirely composed of birds shot in his district, generally by himself, and all skinned and stuffed *from the flesh* by himself. As a last, but not the least, argument, I dare say if he had been aware of the real importance of this specimen, he would not have sent it me as *Glareola pratincola*, and charged me only four francs for it.

The differences between *G. pratincola* and *G. melanoptera* consist mainly in the latter having the axillaries and under wing-coverts not of a lively chestnut colour, but black, the upper parts darker, and the green glossy tint more developed, the secondaries uniformly coloured, and not tipped with white, the under-surface of the body paler, but the flanks darker. Besides, in my specimen the throat is whiter or less ochreous, the hinder neck is more rusty, the head is very dark, almost black on the forehead, and between the eye and bill there is a broad black band, which forms a very large spot embracing the fore part of the eye, while in *G. pratincola* the forehead

is like the head, or scarcely darker, and there is only a very narrow black line on the lores, generally quite obsolete; sometimes only a small black patch on the fore part of the eye is observed.

Glareola melanoptera has never appeared before in Italy, but Prof. Giglioli has included it among those species which might possibly occur in our subregion. It inhabits, according to Sharpe, S.E. Europe, especially the Volga and the lowlands of the Caucasus, as far west as the Dobrudscha, and even Hungary, wintering in Africa. I have seen two fine specimens of this Pratincole, killed at Sistova (Bulgaria), in the Museum of Sarajevo.

G. melanoptera is the larger bird; I give herewith the measurements:—

G. melanoptera: total length 9·3 inches, culmen 0·75, wing 7·4, tail 4·3, tarsus 1·5.

G. pratincola: total length about 9 inches, culmen 0·72, wing 7·4, tail 4·5, tarsus 1·3.

Glareola pratincola is mostly a bird of passage in Italy, more usually found in southern localities during the spring. It breeds in Sicily in the marshes of Catania, Girgenti, and Syracuse, and even in Tuscany. In Northern Italy it is a straggler, while in autumn it is generally uncommon everywhere.

I have seventeen specimens of it in my collection from the following places:—

- a-d.* Semi-ad., April 1st, 1890; ♂♂ and ♀, May 16th and 21st, 1896, Padua.
- e g.* ♂, May 15th, 1895, May 9th and 18th, 1896, Venetia.
- h, i.* ♂, May 2nd, 1888, May 7th, 1893, Lonigo (Vicenza).
- k.* Young, August 22nd, 1892, on the River Po, near Turin.
- l.* ♀, May 18th, 1898, Verona.
- m, n.* ♂♀, May 11th, 1897, Massaciuccoli Lake (Tuscany).
- o.* ♀, May 6th, 1894, Elba Island (Tuscany).
- p.* ♂, May 10th 1896, Bari (Puglie).
- q.* ♂, May 12th, 1894, Sicily.
- r.* ♀, May 9th, 1891, Sardinia.

Ca'oddo, near Monselice, Padua, Italy,
October 14th, 1899.

V.—On two Nesting-places of Gannets and Terns in the South Indian Ocean. By Commander STUART ST. J. FARQUHAR, R.N.

BETWEEN the Seychelles and Mauritius lies a group of coral-islands known as the "Farquhar Islands," named after a former Governor of Mauritius. This group is composed of two larger islands, separated by a narrow stretch of shoal-water, and extends about eight miles in length and half a mile to a mile in breadth, forming with the surrounding coral-reef an almost perfect atoll. There is a layer of about six inches of guano on these islands, and the vegetation is almost entirely coconut-trees, planted by natives, and a species of mangrove-bush. Of bird-life there is plenty. Guinea-fowl, which were introduced many years ago, are now very numerous and do much damage to the small patches of Indian corn. Several kinds of Doves are resident: one, a very small, short-winged species (*Turtur rostratus*), is abundant, and I obtained a good many of their eggs. Fowls, which have strayed from the settlement, form a not inconsiderable item in a day's shooting, as they have bred freely, and the offspring are as wild as the wildest Pheasants in England. The sea-birds, however, form the principal attraction, being far more numerous and varied than any other family. Three kinds of Gannets, or Boobies, were common, viz. *Sula piscator*, *S. cyanops*, and *S. leucogastra*.

The first-named of these species was found nesting on both the main islands, and, so far as I could ascertain by enquiry and observation, was the only one which did so. All the other sea-birds nested on a small island named Goelet Island, from the immense number of Sooty Terns (called "Goelets" by the natives) which resort there. *Sula piscator* alone did not, probably because on Goelet Island there were very few bushes, whereas the two large islands were almost entirely overgrown with scrub. *S. cyanops* and *S. leucogastra* both nest on the ground, and *S. piscator* always on the bushes.

On July 10th, 1897, I paid a visit to Goelet Island; it is

inside the reef, and can be approached only in a small boat, owing to the numerous rocks and the shallow water. On the way there our boat was the object of much curiosity on the part of the Boobies (*Sula piscator*). These inquisitive birds, especially those in immature plumage, literally crowded round to see us. One would hover above my head, just going fast enough to keep pace with the boat; it would examine with an apparently critical eye every detail, turning its head from side to side in a most comical way. If I put up my hand to catch it, it did not attempt to fly away, but would give a sort of squawk and peck at my fingers; there it would remain till driven off by another who wanted to look. There was apparently no reason for these attentions, as we were a mile from the shore and in no way interfering with their domestic arrangements.

The other Gannets were far more reserved and never came near us at all. *S. piscator*, as I have already mentioned, nested in great numbers on the main islands; they make a nest like the Common Heron and lay one egg: certainly there was never more than one chick in a nest. They were all hatched out at the time of my visit. The young are clothed in snowy-white down, and never leave the nest until they can fly; this is doubtless necessary for their preservation, as the earth swarms with land-crabs, which eat everything and anything they can get, and make short work of a young Booby. These are very fat, and I watched the old birds feeding them on half-digested fish: naturally the nests smelt very strong. They are most difficult birds to skin satisfactorily on account of the fat, and the natives, when they require skins, adopt the cruel method of carrying the young away from the colony to some distant spot and placing them on bare bushes, where they soon get thin, being unable to obtain any food. I saw some which had lived thus nearly a fortnight and had plenty of vitality left. On our way to Goelet Island we passed many turtles, which were at this time just beginning to come ashore to lay their eggs; they swam very fast, and easily outstripped the boat. The immense number of birds on Goelet resembled from the sea

a swarm of bees over a hive, and the noise they made could be heard a long way off.

The island is about half a mile long by a quarter of a mile wide, and two places in the centre of it had been selected as nesting-stations by the Sooty Terns (*Sterna fuliginosa* and *S. anæstha*). All, or nearly all, these birds had young, and their serried masses hid the ground, while, as you approached, the chicks ran away or opened out to let you pass, and the effect was like a moving black carpet. I only walked on the outskirts of this throng of birds, but that was quite enough, for the old birds literally mobbed me, striking me repeatedly with their wings and shrieking in a most deafening manner. So fearless were they that one could catch them by the hand as fast as one liked.

The ground here was bare of herbage; but close round the outside of the colony long coarse grass grew abundantly, and this was alive with Noddies (*Anous stolidus*), all with nestlings or hard-set eggs. These birds were even more pugnacious than the Sooty Terns. All three species lay only one egg; at least I never saw more than one egg or young bird in a nest.

Dotted about the rest of the island could be seen Gannets (*Sula cyanops* and *S. leucogastra*) sitting on their nests, off which they had to be pushed with a stick; they fought savagely, and repeatedly struck the stick with beak and wings, hissing loudly. They had all hard-set eggs or young. Some nests contained two eggs, but I invariably found one of these to be infertile or rotten, while there never was more than one young bird in a nest.

Just above the shingle at one corner of the island a colony of Roseate Terns (*Sterna dougalli*) were nesting, their eggs being in all stages of incubation. These had sometimes three, two, or one egg, and at first I thought that where there were only one or two eggs they would prove fresh, but such was not the case. Nearly all the eggs of these birds were fertile. The nests were close together, and very few had young.

Not far from the Roseate Terns there was a small colony

of the Great Sea-Tern (*S. bernsteini* [?] *), with mostly fresh or slightly incubated eggs, no young. These are the most beautiful eggs of the Terns which I have met with. One egg apiece is all they lay, and there was no attempt at a nest. I took about 30 eggs; nearly all these were fresh.

Besides *S. dougalli* and *S. bernsteini* [?] there was a colony white Terns with black bills, apparently some form of *Gygis*, but I had no means of identifying them at the time, and my skins were afterwards lost. These were not nesting.

There were also a number of Turnstones on the island, and from their behaviour I at first imagined that they must be nesting, but such was not the case. The manager of the coconut-plantation, Mr. Speirs, who was well acquainted with all the birds of these islands, assured me, however, that he had on one occasion found the Turnstone nesting on an island of the Chagos group, where he saw the birds sitting on their nests in the débris above high-water mark, and was most positive about this, adding that he saw the eggs himself. He said he had often searched for them since, but had never again succeeded in finding them. Those I observed had their breeding-organs quite undeveloped, as I shot several and examined them. There was also a small species of Curlew on the island, but as, like all this kind, it was very wary, I could not get a shot, and was therefore unable to identify it.

On a few bushes round the edge of the water I found two species of Heron—the Common Heron (*Ardea cinerea*) and another which I could not at the time identify, and, having lost the skins I made, I have not since been able to do so†. *A. cinerea* had young ones or hard-set eggs, and the other sort only eggs, sometimes as many as six in a nest.

There were a good many Frigate-birds about, but they

* [Commander Farquhar names the bird *S. maxima*, a species mainly American; but it was more probably the very local *S. bernsteini*, which is found about Diego Garcia, Rodriguez, and the vicinity, though possibly the widely-distributed Swift Tern, *S. bergii*.—EDD.]

† *Description of the small Heron*.—Bill yellow; head capped with buff; legs horn-colour; toes black; irides yellow: all the rest white. Of about the same size as the common Cattle-Heron of India, but not corresponding to that bird in breeding-plumage.

were not nesting. Their principal occupation seemed to be robbing the Boobies and Gannets of their food. The natives said they nested in November, but I had no opportunity of proving this.

On June 24th, 1898, I visited Beacon Island, a small rock in the heart of the S.E. trade-wind, about five miles from Port Victoria, Mahé, Seychelles group. The landing was very difficult, the swell being heavy, but I managed to jump ashore. Generally this island is inaccessible, as the sea breaks all round it, except in the finest weather, and there is always a swell. Here I found *Sterna anæsthesa* and *S. fuliginosa* in fair numbers, though not nearly so numerous as at Goelet Island. The former is a small replica of *S. fuliginosa*, but is not quite so black on the neck and back, and the inner web of the middle toe does not reach to the end of it, as in *S. fuliginosa*. *S. fuliginosa* had mostly fresh eggs, and *S. anæsthesa* generally hard-set or young. *S. fuliginosa* always nested in the open, *S. anæsthesa*, more often than not, under stones, rocks, or hidden under tufts of grass. Both these species bred all over the island. This to a certain extent was true of *Anous stolidus*, which was fairly plentiful, but seemed to keep together more than the other two. There was a fair-sized colony of *S. dougalli* here also, but they were most exclusive, keeping quite by themselves, and were much wilder than any of the others. I could not catch *S. dougalli* by hand, all the others I could. These were the only birds on the island, but there were immense numbers of beautiful copper-coloured lizards, which must have taken a heavy toll of the eggs. If I broke one, the lizards found and ate it at once; they were not large enough to take the young birds.

VI.—*On the Migration of Phalaropes in Montana.*

By EWEN SOMERLED CAMERON, F.Z.S.

PREVIOUSLY to the spring of 1899 I had looked upon Phalaropes as quite rare in North-eastern Montana, having seen the Red-necked Phalarope only once, and Wilson's Phalarope